

EPIPHANY 2024

Follow Your Star: Seeking Light



Serve & Enrich
Zion United Church
of Christ

The 5th Sunday After the Epiphany

Prelude

O Lord, Remember Me

Gathering—Proclaim the Good News! Our wondrous God is just and merciful, full for compassion and grace. Come to worship this day that you might find release from your burdens and hope for what’s ahead.

****Gathering Song**

Surely the Presence, 131

A Time of Prayer—Loving God, in this season of Epiphany, your kingdom has drawn close—so close we can almost touch it. Help us see that we already live under your rule of peace. May our worship today draw us closer to you and to one another...Loving God, it is you we worship this day. Amen~

The Lord's Prayer (unison)—Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Exploring God’s Word for All Ages

Star Word: Release

We Hear God’s Word—Jonah 3

Greg Miller

³The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, ²‘Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.’ ³So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk across. ⁴Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, ‘Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!’ ⁵And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

⁶ When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: ‘By the decree of the king and his nobles: No

human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. ⁸Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. ⁹Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish.’

10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

Meditation

Follow Your Star: Release

Hymn

I Surrender All, 474

We Gather at the Table

Set Your Place at the Table—Whatever you have on hand to celebrate communion will work just fine, because this ancient ritual is not about what we use for this meal or where we partake of it. Instead, it is about the act of remembrance. So, gather around the table, prepare your place, and remember that Christ is in our midst.

Our Invitation—Follow the star to the table of grace. Here we find gifts beyond price. Follow the star to the table of blessing. Here we find strength for the journey. Follow the star to the table of peace. Here we find rest and refreshment. Follow the star to the table of Christ. Here we find light and love.~

A Prayer for Transformation— Holy One, what a blessing and privilege we share here in this sacred space and among this loving community. But, like Jonah, we sometimes are jealous of what we share here. We know that others are longing and thirsting for what we know and experience. Forgive us our reluctance to open our doors, open our hearts to others; some like us, some not. We repent of our hesitations and unwillingness to witness to those we have considered strangers and even enemies for fear they just might become friends. **Amen.**+

Assurance of Grace— The one who calls us to this place calls us to reconciliation through grace. God will not deny a repentant heart or an open

spirit. Know that you are forgiven and walk in the new way that is made known to you in God's love. **Amen.**+

The Words of Institution— On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." And so, we remember...we offer ourselves...we proclaim God's love...

Blessing Our Meal—Come, Holy Spirit, come. May your presence be known in this bread and in this cup as we gather for this holy meal. Make known the grace and mercy of Christ to all who have found their seat at this table. By receiving the gift we find here, may we be empowered to proclaim your Good News that others too might know your wondrous love. Amen.

We Share the Bread and the Cup—Take now and eat, this is the body of Christ broken for you. Take now and drink, this is the cup of the renewed covenant, Christ's blood given for you.

We Give Thanks—Almighty God, we give you thanks for the gift of our Savior's presence in the simplicity and splendor of this holy meal. Unite us with all who are fed by Christ's body and blood that we may faithfully proclaim the good news of your love and that your universal church may be a rainbow of hope in an uncertain world; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.`

We Respond to God's Word with Our Giving

Invitation—Our journey leads us now to a moment of renewal and rededication of our lives to Christ's work. In our offering we bring all that we are as we commit ourselves to proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ by sharing abundantly in the work of God's kingdom. Jonah shared but one line of proclamation: 'Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' Through that God poured out grace upon a whole nation. No matter how big or small your gift might be, God can do incredible things.

February Benevolence—Our Church’s Wider Mission

****Doxology**

We Give Thanks—Glorious God, bring glory to these gifts and to the offering we share with you and your church. Bring the light of your justice and righteousness to the dark corners of our world. Bring the glory of your love and compassion to heal our broken communities. Bring the hope of generosity and gratitude to places in need of transformation. Amen.~

Hymn

O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus, 398

Benediction— Repent and believe the good news that God is with us and calls us for a purpose! May the God of second chances renew your sense of call and inspire you to go out and share the good news of forgiveness and hope! =

Postlude

Sing Alleluia!

You’re invited to stand if you are comfortably able and so called.

~“From The Abingdon Worship Annual 2018. Copyright © 2017 by Abingdon Press. Used by permission.” =Feasting on the Word Worship Companion. `UCC Book of Worship.